

THE SOUTH CAROLINA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT

**VR³ Ready...Reliable...Results**

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Examiner's compassion and expertise helps claimant get vital, urgent services

Listen.

On the phone, a claimant is answering questions about his activities of daily living and how his condition limits his functions in day-to-day activities. But there's something in his voice...

K.C. Dangerfield, a Disability Examiner at the Disability Determination Services (DDS) office in Charleston, had been working on the claimant's application for less than a month. He has liver damage and had already been in and out of the hospital several times, and she knew he was worried about his medical bills.

"We were able to make a presumptive disability decision based on his condition, which was getting progressively worse," she says. "That helped get his benefits rolling until we could make a final decision."

But there was additional information she needed and because he was homeless it was difficult to get in touch with the claimant, who lived in the woods outside Myrtle Beach. There was a hotel he would occasionally stop in, where the employees knew him and would let him use the phone.

Listen.

There was something about the way he was speaking. She needed to switch focus. Dangerfield could tell the claimant didn't feel well and asked him about that. He said that he felt like his belly was swollen and he was having a lot of pain. And he hadn't been able to ride his bike that day.

"Is it getting worse?" Dangerfield asked.

"Oh, yes."

He needed to get care, but she had trouble convincing him. He kept repeating that he had no income and he had no way to pay for medical care. She needed an advocate present with the claimant. She switched focus again.

"Is there anybody in the hotel who can look at you right now and describe what condition you're in?"

The claimant handed the phone to a hotel employee who gave Dangerfield a detailed description of the claimant's appearance. The employee ended by saying, "He's basically doubled in size since I saw him yesterday."

Dangerfield realized that the employee was describing severe ascites, an accumulation of fluid in the peritoneal cavity. Her claimant was in trouble and she told the hotel employee that if the claimant went back to where he normally lived he may not live through the night. She advised that they should call 911 and get the claimant immediate care.

"When [the hotel employee] realized how serious his condition was, she



In recognition of the compassionate and professional manner with which she provides service to claimants, K.C. Dangerfield received the Mary Simmons Special Act of Service Award during the SC DDS PRIDE awards banquet held April 11 at the SC State Museum in Columbia.

When [the needer employee] realized how serious his condition was, she made that call."

When the claimant got to Waccamaw Community Hospital he was met by Amy Turner, a legal representative with Chamberlain Edmonds, an advocate group for patients. Turner had assisted the claimant in filing his disability application and continued to work with Dangerfield to ensure DDS had the information they needed to make the final disability decision for the claimant. Turner reassured him that because of the presumptive disability decision he would be able to pay his bill and get the care he needed. She helped calm him down so that the doctors could perform the paracentesis he needed, removing five to six liters of fluid that had built up in his abdomen.

Turner called Dangerfield the next day to let her know how thrilled the claimant was to be in the hospital and how much better he was feeling.

"I just wanted to give him the quickest, best service we possibly could," says Dangerfield.

"Amy did an exceptional job getting me the information I needed for his case to make the determination," she adds, "as well as interacting with the hospital on the claimant's behalf. She really went the extra mile. And she made sure the claimant kept in contact with me. She constantly told me, 'Don't give up on him because he is homeless.'"

Before coming to work for DDS, Dangerfield spent seven and a half years as a social worker, and prior to that she herself had worked for a hotel. Effective communication and listening were critical elements in both fields, just as they are in her current role.

"We have guides that tell you how to do an 'activities of daily living phone call' with someone," she says. "But when you're talking to a person, you're having a conversation. You don't know the next question you're going to ask until you listen to the answers you're getting."

That's something Dangerfield strives to teach new examiners. As part of a group that trains examiners, she stresses that you can't follow a template or preset list of questions. "You may begin talking to a claimant about one issue, but during the conversation discover that the real issue involves something else entirely. Or several things. Now you're going in a whole different direction. If you follow a template, you will never get to where you need to go."

A few days after getting out of the hospital the claimant called Dangerfield. He was very emotional over his situation and wanted to thank her for going above and beyond.

"He sounded great," says Dangerfield.

"Thank you so much," he said. "You saved my life!"

Around the state

Spring Fling Carnival in Lancaster



Tina Stuber, left, serves as the Fortune Teller with a Lancaster High Student.

The Lancaster office hosted a Spring Fling Carnival for transition students on May 2nd. Students and parents enjoyed an outdoor carnival theme

with festive food and employment-related games which also helped the local transition counselors discover students in need of VR services.

"The Workers' Walk" was a version of musical chairs featuring work related songs such as *Shift Work, 9 to 5, Taking Care of Business, Get a Job, Car Wash*, and many others.

Others enjoyed hearing fortunes of great career options revealed by resident fortune teller "The Great Tanini" (Tina Stuber, Business Development Specialist).

Students also learned about upcoming summer activities available at SCVRD and toured the Work Training Center.

Representatives from community resources such as Adult Education and HOPE of Lancaster were also on hand to provide families with information about other resources, and SCVRD Benefits Specialist Camechia Nesmith talked with parents and students about SSI benefits.



Susan Sims, Counselor, and Nathan Barnes, ATS, lead the Worker's Walk (musical chairs).

Law officers and veterans learn about VR services

Fifty Law Enforcement Officers and veterans participated in an information session at the Laurens Area Office. Chad Ulmer, Laurens Area Office Supervisor and Heidi Blackstock, Laurens Area Office Counselor presented information about Job Retention Services.



From left, Eric Skidmore, SCLEAP; Captain J. Tyson, Laurens County Sheriff's Office, jail division; Heidi Blackstock, Counselor; Cpl. Bryan Stevens, Presbyterian College; Sheriff Ricky Chastain, Laurens County Sheriff's Office; Sgt. Bryan Shaver, SC National Guard.

Rock Hill partnership supports deaf advocacy

SCVRD's Rock Hill office and Bridge Interpreting Services recently sponsored training on the rights of individuals who are deaf and on

sponsored training on the rights of individuals who are deaf, and on helping them learn how to advocate for themselves and get an interpreter when needed.



Left to right: Emily Walker, American Sign Language (ASL)/English Interpreter; Kathleen Allen, SCVRD Rock Hill area supervisor; and Kathy Aperson and Beverly Woodel, deaf service specialists from North Carolina.

Did you know...



...that this year marks the 35th anniversary of the dedication of the SCVRD Evaluation Center?

It was the very first building on the agency's West Columbia campus and brought on-site physical therapy, occupational therapy, hydrotherapy and other comprehensive services to the agency's clients for the first time.

Prior to the center's opening clients with the most significant physical disabilities would often go to Georgia or Virginia for those services. It was dedicated in 1978 and named in honor of former Commissioner Dill Beckman.

Events

The Bryant Center

The Bryant Center is accepting referrals for its two-week **comprehensive summer program for transition students**. Students attending one of the four scheduled sessions will participate in physical therapy and exercise; learn independent living skills through occupational therapy; enhance leadership, teamwork and communication skills; explore careers and post-secondary interests; and engage in mock interviews and other job preparedness activities.

- July 15-26 - Session 3: **Summer Transition Program**.
- July 29-August 9 - Session 4: **Summer Transition Program**.
All sessions meet 9 am-12 pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday. To refer a student, please fax a SCVR 219, SCVR 318, SCVR 318a (signed by the student and parent) and a Comprehensive Center referral form to Jennie Thomas at 864-949-6775.
For more information, call 864-249-8030 or 888-322-9391

Comprehensive Evaluation Center (CEC)

The CEC **Summer Transition Evaluation Program for Students (STEPS)** is offering three sessions this summer. Referrals are being accepted. Students will participate in physical therapy/exercise, occupational therapy, nutrition counseling, career exploration, and work readiness activities.

- July 8-19 - Session 2: **Summer Transition Program**.
- July 22-August 9 - Session 3: **Summer Transition Program**.
For more information, contact Gloria Plotnik 803-896-6040

Richland

- July 8-19 - Session 2: **Summer Institute** for transition students.
- August 9 - **Summer Slam**: Summer "Wrap Up" activities for transition students. The program will include student speakers and awards for participation. Guest speakers are on the agenda, to include business and agency partners. Partner awards will also be presented.
For more information, call 803-782-4239 or 866-206-5280

Lexington

- June 17-July 16 - **Transition Summer Institute**, which includes participation in Job Readiness Training (JRT) and Job Preparedness Instruction (JPI) classes, and activities such as tours/information session at Midlands Technical College, the State House and the Columbia Metropolitan Airport. Students will also have a service learning day at the Habitat for Humanity on July 16.
For more information, call 803-896-6333 or 866-206-5184

Camden

- July 18th 10 am-noon - ABLE South Carolina will host an Informational Session for clients to discuss Independent Living and Self Advocacy at the Camden Area office.
For more information, call 803-432-1068 or 866-206-5280

Columbia

- July 16-18 - The SC **Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)**, an annual career leadership program for high school juniors and seniors (or high school students between the ages of 17-21) with disabilities who have leadership aspirations in both their school and community, returns to Newberry College and the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School. Students will enhance and grow their leadership, citizenship and social skills while taking part in activities enabling them to network, learn from each other and build lasting friendships. Get more information at yfl.scvrd.net.
- July 12, 8am-4pm - SC **Brain Injury Alliance Conference** at the Columbia Conference Center, 169 Laurelhurst Avenue, Columbia, SC. Get more information from the [Brain Injury Association of South Carolina](http://BrainInjuryAssociationofSouthCarolina.org).

Greenville

- The Greenville VR Office Transition Team is busy planning summer activities for students. The **High School/High Tech Summer Institute** is scheduled for early August. The Institute will include a tour of Proterra.

scheduled for early August. The institute will include a tour of Proterra, a new manufacturing company that produces EcoRide™ electric buses for the City of Greenville. To help students to learn about various occupations in healthcare, visits to the Life Center with Greenville Hospital System are also planned. Greenville County Forensics Division will provide opportunities for small-group tours and job shadows. Throughout the summer, focus groups will be meeting to discuss skills for success when pursuing post-secondary education, as well as other activities to encourage leadership and self-advocacy. Internships and job shadows are scheduled with several partners, including Greenville Free Medical Clinic, Proaxis Physical Therapy, Firestone, Kia of Greer, Arché Designs and South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. *For more information, call 864-297-3066*

Enabling eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment

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